Equal Rights

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Brooklyn Girl Learns to Fly in 20 Minutes With New Instruments

Bessie Davis of Brooklyn, New York, probably established a record in time required to learn to pilot an airplane at Bolling Field, where the Aerial Industrial Exhibition was recently held. Climbing in a Pioneer "flying showcase," equipped with all the latest navigating instruments, with her instructor, she was able to control the plane after twenty minutes in the air.

Feminist Notes

Women's Nationality in Germany

THE first victory of the six-year struggle of Dr. Luders, member of the Reichstag, to gain for German women the right to retain their own nationality upon marriage to foreigners, came recently when she obtained the unanimous adoption of a resolution to pass a bill to this effect. The resolution is as follows: "The Reichstag resolves to adopt the following resolution: To prepare immediately a bill whereby the Reich and States Nationality Law of the 22nd July, 1913, shall be modified in the sense that loss of German nationality by a German woman on marriage with a foreigner shall not occur so long as the couple do not remove their domicile outside German territory, and the wife has not specifically renounced her existing nationality. On removal of domicile to a foreign country, the wife shall only lose her German nationality on the assumption that by her marriage she obtains her husband's nationality under the laws of the country of their new domicile. A German woman contracting marriage with a stateless person shall retain her nationality without further formality."

First Woman Lawyer in Bolivia

MARIA JOSEFA SAAVEDRA, daughter of Dr. Abdon Saavedra, Vice-President of the Bolivian Republic, has passed her final law examinations, and has become a doctor of laws. She is the first woman to qualify as a lawyer in Bolivia.

Feminism of New China Spreads

THE rapidly growing Feminism of New China has spread to the Bowery, according to the New York *Times*. Breaking down the custom of centuries, Chinese women have been acting of late in the Chinese Theatre on New York's Bowery. Where once only the male actor appeared, now black-eyed maidens entertain the Westernized Chinese audience. Indeed, they have outdone the West, for recently the women portrayed, very excellently, the parts of men, in their ancient scenes of folklore and presentations of past heroes.

Many of the male actors in the Bowery playhouse were loth to give up their parts as women in the beloved traditional fantasies, and tried to keep their roles. For years they had made the handling of silken robes and the reciting of passages of poetry an art; no woman, they said, could possibly play the woman with the grace and charm they had acquired. If women must act, let them portray the less difficult parts of men!

Washington Women to Meet

THE Tenth Annual Assembly of the Woman's Legislative Council of the State of Washington will meet in Seattle, June 21-24. This council unites on a legislative program—always including several Equal Rights measures—for which it works in the State Legislature.

Demands for Equality in New Zealand

THE National Council of Women of New Zealand has adopted resolutions for equal pay and opportunity for women, and for the right of women to retain their own nationality regardless of marriage.

British Feminist Dies

"THE death of Mrs. Arthur Johnson," says *Time and Tide*, "marks the end not only of one life of wide activity and distinguished usefulness, but of a phase in the history of women's work at Oxford. Bertha Todd, the able young daughter of an Irish physician, was educated by her brother's drill sergeant and tutor, attended the Slade School, exhibited at the Royal Academy, and held ideas of her own about women's education before she married the Rev. A. H. Johnson and went to live at Oxford at a time when Ruskin was lecturing, and Clara Pater and Mrs. Humphrey Ward shone as the bright stars in a literary and artistic firmament. In Oxford she spent her married life, entertained her friends and her husband's, brought up two sons, took part in civic life as a Poor Law Guardian, chairman of the Working Women's Provident Society, and many similar organizations. And there she found her own particular life's work as principal of the Oxford Home Students. She became a brilliant example of the married woman who successfully fulfills a career, working in close co-operation with her husband. Women at Oxford owe a debt of gratitude to her untiring service in the cause of their position in the university, and women in the world outside owe much to her triumphant example and genial courage. She lost her husband only last January, and it is perhaps fitting that so admirable a partnership should not for long have been broken.

Turkish Women's Suffrage Meeting

THE Turkish Woman Suffrage Society held its first Congress in March. Naziya Mouheddin was re-elected president, and it was decided to admit men as auxiliary members of the Kaden Birghili (Union of Women). The Congress adopted a resolution calling for equal political rights for Moslem women.

Male Student Wins Admission to Course

AT last a male student of the University of Texas has won admission to the courses in home economics. A few years ago a man was denied the right to take a course in home economics. Today, however, Robert Massengale of Cameron, Texas, is registered for the course in interior decorating and art appreciation in the home. He plans to use what he learns there in his work of designing stage settings.

Folk Lore and Feminism

CALLING for a man's help to kill a snake "is not done" in West Texas, according to Helen Hall, student of the University of Texas, who has a collection of thirty-five skins of snakes she has killed, including the skins of twenty-five rattlesnakes. Since she was a child Miss Hall has been studying reptile life, learning to distinguish between poisonous and non-poisonous snakes, and to kill the poisonous reptiles. The present collection does not represent her whole achievement in the extermination of poisonous snakes, as she gives away many of her skins. She spent her girlhood working as a "cowboy" on her father's ranch, and learned to use her saddle rope in protecting herself and her pony from dangerous snakes.

Icelandic Woman Author Honored

KRISTIN SIGFUSDOTTIR, an Icelandic author, has been invited to a banquet of honor at Reykjavik. She taught herself to read and write, published her first book when her sixth child was seven years old, did the housework and labored on a farm, and has now had a play produced and two notable novels acclaimed as of exceptional merit.

One Discrimination Removed

ONE discrimination against women was removed by the recently adjourned session of the Washington State Legislature. This bill provides that shares of stocks in corporations, standing in the name of a married woman, may be transferred by her, her agent or attorney, without the signature of her husband; and that all dividends payable on such stock shall be paid to her, her agent or attorney, and it shall not be necessary for her husband to join in a receipt therefor. Further, any proxy or power given by her, touching shares of stock standing in her name, shall be valid without her husband's signature.

One step toward Equal Rights, when all could be gained for all time by an amendment to the United States Constitution!

But even one step counts.

The Open Door Council

TOWARD the close of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance Congress in Paris last year, a group of delegates who were like-minded on the question of industrial equality for men and women, met at the Hotel Gerson and set in motion a new international organization, "The Open Door Council," its object being "To secure that women shall be free to work and protected as workers on the same terms as men, and that legislation and regulations dealing with conditions and hours, entry and training shall be based upon the nature of the work and not upon the sex of the worker; and to secure for women, irrespective of marriage or childbirth, the right at all times to decide whether or not they shall engage in paid work, and to ensure that no legislation or regulations shall deprive them of this right."

Mrs. Elizabeth Abbott is chairman of the Open Door Council, and the following are members of its Executive Council:

Miss L. de Alberti, Mrs. Archdale, The Lady Balfour of Burleigh, Miss F. Barry, Miss F. M. Beaumont, Mrs. Bompas, Miss Clegg, Councillor Mrs. Crawford, Professor Winifred Cullis, D.Sc., Miss Crystal Eastman, Miss Mary Fielden, Councillor Miss Helen Fraser, Miss Cicely Hamilton, Miss V. Holmes, B.Sc., A. M. I. Mech. E., Miss Chrystal MacMillan, Dr. Louise Martindale, J. P., Miss Winifred Mayo, Miss F. de G. Merrifield, Miss Anna Munro, Miss Alison Neilans, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence, The Viscountess Rhondda, J. P., Miss Edith Rodgers, Miss Rosamond Smith, L. C. C., Miss Madge Turner, Miss Florence Underwood, Dr. Jane Walker, J. P., Miss Monica Whately.

The policy and aims of the Council are set forth at length in a recently published leaflet:

"The Open Door Council has one clearly defined object: equal opportunities and conditions for all adult women workers, professional or industrial, married or unmarried; and equal chances of training and entry into all the professions and trades."

"It believes that women should be free to choose their paid work and to remain in it when it seems well to them that they should so remain. It believes that capacity is the test, not sex. It believes women have the same right to work as other adults. It believes that any legislation or regulations which deprive a woman of such choice on the ground that she is a woman or that she is married deprive her of a right which is inalienable in the case of every other adult human being.

"To forbid a woman to work because she is a woman, because she is married, because she is to bear a child, or because she is a mother, is not, in the opinion of the Open Door Council, protection. It is a limitation; and, when it comes to earning a living, a very real disadvantage.

"The Open Door Council is not opposed to the protection of the workers; but it believes that in every field of work, every necessary protection can be afforded to every type of worker, by basing regulations on the nature of the occupation."

The first annual meeting of the Council was held in London on April 4, 1927, Professor Winifred Cullis, D.Sc., presiding; the speakers being Miss Monica Whately, Labor candidate for the Hythe Division; Miss E. E. Froud, general secretary, National Union of Women Teachers, vice-chairman, Equal Political Rights Campaign Committee; Mrs. Elizabeth Abbott, and Mrs. Aldridge, for nine years organizing secretary to the Manchester and Salford Women's Trades Union Council.

A recent letter from Mrs. Abbott states: "There is an increasing interest in the work of the Open Door Council, and since it has now adopted a constitution allowing the formation of branches, which have the object of the Council as their sole object, and the Association of Societies which declare by resolution of their governing bodies that they accept the object, we expect during the coming year to treble our activities. A leaflet is being prepared on conditions of working women in Scandinavian countries, and we hope next year to hold a summer school on the subject of restrictive legislation."

At the meeting for organization in Paris, Miss Elsie Hill and Mrs. Clarence M. Smith were appointed to represent the National Woman's Party in the Open Door Council.

Health of Professional Women

AN important light is thrown on the health of professional women by an article in the April issue of the *Medical Women's Journal*, official organ of the Medical Women's National Association. This article, written by Letitia Fairfield, C. B. E., M.D., D. P. H., divisional medical officer of the London County Council and formerly woman medical director to the Women's Royal Air Force, is based on studies of the causes of absence of women teachers in the London elementary schools.

During a period of fifteen years (1904-19), the mean illness of men teachers was 4.6 days a year, while that of single women was 8.2 days a year, and that of married women was 9.3 days a year. At the same time, however, the death rate of men teachers was higher than that of women teachers, being 0.44 per cent., while that of women was 0.25 per cent.

Dr. Fairfield points out the interesting fact that total absence due to menopause and diseases of women over a period of fifteen years, involving 13,748 teachers, was 0.13 day per year for each single woman and 0.24 day for each married woman, excluding pregnancy.

Commenting on this fact, Dr. Fairfield declares that regulations adopted by certain government departments and commercial institutions allowing their women employes one day's holiday a month, and the practice of one large institution of retiring its women at the age of 45 years "are very detrimental to the status of professional women"—another scientific recognition of the harmful effect of "protective" measures.

Dr. Fairfield analyses "overwork" and "overstrain" as a cause of illness in women teachers, and says:

> "It is significant that I have never known a girl break down permanently (without definite physical reason) in the preliminary stages of the teaching profession who had not already desired to give up teaching, usually for reasons financial or amorous.
>
> "It will be found that what is called over-work is usually too monotonous work, or lack of recreation and emotional outlet. Often this is not the teacher's own fault, as the single women sometimes find that relatives make enormous claims on their time and money, without any of the compensations accruing to the married man."

Thus it would appear that the restrictions on women's professional achievement—such as the lack of freedom of choice of occupation, the lack of advancement in rank and pay, the discouragement of marriage on the part of women—are the *cause*, not the result, as is often popularly declared, of women's lower physical vitality.

Dr. Fairfield further points out that in the days of under-payment and restricted opportunities of work for women, the hygiene of women was far inferior to that of men as regards clothes, exercise, and diet, and that improvements in these respects are bringing improvement in the health of women.

Her conclusion is:

> "There seems to be no reason to think that employment in the brain-working occupations outside the home has any detrimental effect on women's bodies and minds."

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OBJECT OF THE WOMAN'S PARTY

To remove all forms of the subjection of women.

THE LUCRETIA MOTT AMENDMENT

"Men and women shall have Equal Rights throughout the United States and every place subject to its jurisdiction."

"Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation."

[Senate Joint Resolution Number 11.
House Joint Resolution Number 81.]

Introduced in the Senate, December 8, 1925, by Senator Charles E. Curtis.
Introduced in the House of Representatives, December 16, 1925, by Representative D. R. Anthony.

Just Plain Human Beings

DR. JOHN A. RYAN, D.D., writing in *The Tablet* of May 21, expresses the following opinion: "Nothing is more unequal than to treat unequals equally. They are saying give women perfect freedom before the law—the right to contract. Having seen what such a policy has meant for men we know what its future would be for women. *I believe in class legislation.* Every group needs special legislation—bankers, farmers, men, women, children—in other words, distributive justice in social legislation."

With his usual happy faculty of saying in a few words what it takes others volumes to set down in language, Father Ryan here epitomizes the case for the opposition. "I believe in class legislation," he says, frankly and without circumlocution. Thus in a single sentence the dividing line between those who believe in Equal Rights and those who do not believe in Equal Rights is drawn.

From his statement it is clear that the reason why Father Ryan believes in class legislation is because he regards the social structure as constituted of various groups such as, to use his own words, "bankers, farmers, men, women, children." These groups he considers "unequal," and as needing "special legislation."

But there are women bankers nowadays, and women farmers, and women printers and taxi-drivers and teachers and molders and electricians and airplane pilots and sea captains and butchers and bakers and candlestick makers. In a word, there are women as well as men in practically every economic group. Now, then, say in regard to bankers, will Father Ryan proceed to further subdivision and administer two kinds of "distributive justice in social legislation," one kind for women and another kind for men bankers, or will he hold to his original premise and endorse "special legislation" irrespective of sex for the group of bankers as a whole?

IT is to be understood at the outset that those who believe in Equal Rights have no prejudice whatsoever against necessary social legislation; all that they demand is that such legislation shall apply equaly to all adult workers. They do not desire one kind of law for men bankers and another kind for women bankers; or one kind of "distributive justice" for men farmers and another kind for women farmers. They wish all laws that apply to the profession of banking or the occupation of farming to apply equally to all bankers, or to all farmers, regardless of the sex of the individuals who accept these callings. And in his heart of hearts we believe that Father Ryan will understand and endorse the justice of this desire. It would obviously be quite impossible for a woman banker successfully to conduct her business if she were controlled by laws differing from those current in the bulk of the profession. It would be like playing tennis with different rules on the two sides of the net.

The difficulty in Father Ryan's psychology is, and we present the suggestion with the most profound respect, that he views the human family more as it existed in 1827 than as it exists in 1927. Women no longer constitute a group apart from men in the fundamental economic sense. Millions of them, literally, are self-supporting, and the number is on the increase. With the small family of today motherhood is no longer the sort of life-long occupation that it was when an average of from fifteen to twenty children made up the family unit. Moreover, the extension of the provisions of the Fourteenth Amendment to women, which is all that Equal Rights implies, could not possibly interfere with "distributive justice" toward motherhood. "Public aid for children in their own homes," alias mothers' pensions, maternity benefits and even the endowment of motherhood, all are wholly compatible with Equal Rights, just as soldiers' pensions are.

It is our fear, however, that Father Ryan will not change his mind, for when one has been accustomed from infancy to regard women as a sex, it is almost impossible later to look upon them as just plain human beings.

Equalitarian vs. Reformer

By Crystal Eastman

BY a curious chain of circumstances it came about that I took part in the stormiest battle that has stirred the ranks of British women since pre-suffrage days, when militants and constitutionalists so passionately opposed each others' methods—a battle which ended in the dramatic resignation of eleven leading members of the executive, and which has left a deep cleavage in the ranks of the oldest suffrage society in Great Britain.

Protection versus equality for women in industry, birth control and family endowment versus "straight" feminism—in general the same issues that concern and divide the leading women's organizations in America, were the issues round which the storm raged in London. But the "line-up" is surprisingly different here.

In their demand for the franchise nearly all public-spirited women, both in England and America, were united; they were all Feminists together without question of kind or degree. After the suffrage victory they "reverted to type." The humanitarian or social reform type said to itself:

"Thank God, that's over. Now we can stop demanding our rights (which never came natural to us anyhow), and turn once more to doing good, to the various reforms which we believe will benefit the human race. And as we go we can clear up those minor inequalities which exist between men and women."

The equalitarian or pure Feminist type said:

"Thank God, that's over. We have taken the first step. We have established for women the elementary right of citizenship. Now we can go on with the Feminist battle until we have established a real equality of status and opportunity for women in every field."

In America this "reversion to type" led to a complete realignment of forces, to the development of two national organizations, often violently opposed to each other, not merely on matters of tactics as in presuffrage days, but on matters of principle. Witness protective legislation.

In England it led to compromise. There was a special reason for compromise in England; the suffrage victory had been but a partial one. Five million women were still voteless. And leaders of all types felt that they must keep their forces intact until the franchise had been granted to women on the same terms as men. In 1920, shortly after Parliament had granted the suffrage to women over thirty, the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, hoping to hold together both Feminist and reformist types among its members, adopted a new "Object," as follows:

"To obtain all such reforms as are necessary to secure a real equality of liberties, status and opportunities between men and women, and *also such reforms as are necessary to make it possible for women adequately to discharge their functions as citizens.*"

This blanket-reform clause which I have put in italics was designed to include and did eventually include everything from birth control to the League of Nations. It was an unnatural, unworkable compromise and now at last, after seven years of dissension, it has gone to pieces.

STRANGE to say, the inevitable split came just on the eve of an important deputation to the Prime Minister to demand the extension of the franchise to women under thirty. The eleven "equalitarians," as they call themselves, the Feminist half of the executive, resigned in a body publicly the last day of the Conference. The following Tuesday was the day set by Mr. Baldwin to receive the united deputation of suffrage societies, the first deputation of its kind since 1918.

"At least they might have waited till after Tuesday!" said the shocked and startled delegates to each other.

"I consider this most discourteous," said Mrs. Corbett Ashby, International President, who happened to be in the chair that morning. "There is no excuse for members of the executive to make such an announcement publicly to the Conference without giving notice to the board."

"This is a terrible blow!" said Miss Eleanor Rathbone, president and leader of the humanitarian group in the National Union. "I beg these members to reconsider. I call upon the Conference to ask them with all possible urgency to withdraw their resignations for the moment, at least until after the deputation to the Prime Minister. And I appeal to the press to disregard the announcement of the resignations."

But it was too late. Feeling was too tense. The press already had the story, and none of the resigning members would reconsider.

The wonder is not that the split has come, but that the lions and lambs have been lying down together so long in this British society. If you can imagine Mrs. Florence Kelley acting as president of an organization in which slightly less than half of the members and her strongest coworkers on the Executive Committee were stern followers of the strict Feminism of Alice Paul—if you can imagine a program which on the one hand denounced protective laws for women and on the other advocated birth control and the League of Nations, you will get some picture of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship.

I never before realized how strong is the instinct for compromise among the English.

Much is known in America about the English militants, about the adventurous exploits of the Women's Social and Political Union, founded by the Pankhurst's. But of this older, more "regular" suffrage society with an even longer name, almost nothing is known. Yet its history is in many ways as unique if not as romantic. For one thing the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship—commonly called the N. U. S. E. C.—throughout its long life has been dominated by just two leaders.

When far back in 1866 a group of women in London drew up the first suffrage petition which John Stuart Mill presented to the House of Commons, Millicent Garrett, then a girl of nineteen, was a member of the group. By the following year, 1867, when the first woman suffrage society was formed, she had become an active leader and she continued to be an active leader in the movement until the vote was won in 1918.

It was Milicent Garrett, now for many years Mrs. Fawcett, who in 1897 gathered together the suffrage societies which had sprung up all over the country and founded the National Union, of which she became president and remained president until 1919.

Along in the late nineties, another very strong personality became prominent in the organization, Eleanor Rathbone of Liverpool, a woman some thirty years younger than Mrs. Fawcett, daughter of a famous line of Liverpool shipbuilders. Her father and her grandfather were Liberals of great wealth and more than local distinction. Both had devoted their lives and their fortunes to fine generous schemes of constructive philanthropy.

Eleanor Rathbone was a born social reformer, it was in her blood, in her early training and environment. Milicent Fawcett, on the other hand, was a Feminist of the old school. Throughout the last twenty years of the suffrage campaign these two powerful leaders worked side by side in the National Union, and when Mrs. Fawcett decided, after the victory, that the time had come for her to retire from the presidency, she chose Miss Rathbone as her successor with the unanimous consent of the members.

But Miss Rathbone had not held the leadership for three years before she inaugurated a change of policy so emphatic that Mrs. Fawcett felt obliged to resign.

To resign from her own society, which she had created, nursed through its infancy and ruled for half a century!

You see, Eleanor Rathbone, though she was a passionate suffragist, is not primarily a Feminist but a social reformer. After the vote was won she "reverted to type."

During the war Eleanor Rathbone had had charge of the distribution of separation allowances to the wives and children of soldiers from the Liverpool district. As a result of this experience she had become a convinced believer in what is known as "family endowment." This is a system, already quite generally adopted in the poorer industrial districts of France and Germany, by which through direct taxation, a small allowance is paid to a mother for the maintenance of each child. The idea is to relieve poverty by adjusting wages to need, by equalizing to some extent the economic position of the father of a family with that of the single man.

Miss Rathbone has written a book about family endowment, and is becoming known throughout the world as one of its most distinguished advocates. Through her influence as president, the N. U. S. E. C. was persuaded first to study the scheme and finally to advocate family allowances as part of its program. It was at this point that Dame Millicent Fawcett left the society. She does not believe in family allowances; she thinks they would destroy family responsibility, and she feels that the scheme has no place in the Feminist program.

In the same way, with the approval and support of Miss Rathbone, though it was not a pet reform of hers, birth control became part of the N. U. S. E. C. program. A good deal can be said for both these reforms from a Feminist standpoint. They seem to me to bear with considerable directness on securing equality of status for the married woman. But your pure Feminist is apt to be a bit of a doctrinaire. She likes to advocate something that can be stated literally in terms of equality. The equalitarian contingent in the Union was not pleased with this enlargement of its program, but they bowed to the will of the majority.

Meanwhile another big issue had arisen —protective laws, or restrictive laws as the Feminist prefers to call them, for women in industry. On this issue the equalitarians had their way. Year after year they succeeded in passing, against the pronounced opposition of Miss Rathbone who as a reformer believed in protective laws, a resolution declaring that protective legislation should be based on the nature of the work and not on the sex of the worker," and another making it clear that when the Union said equality, it meant equality in industry, too.

This accounts for the fact that at the International in Paris last June, as many American Feminists will remember, nine out of the twelve British delegates voted for the admission of the National Woman's Party, while their president, Eleanor Rathbone voted against its admission.

NOW we come to the annual conference of 1927, which I attended. The large active executive of twenty-four members, almost equally divided between humaritarians and equalitarians, had by its own confession spent the year in dissension and wrangling. They had begun to feel that the situation was impossible. Each group decided to try to strengthen its own position by a vote of the conference.

Miss Rathbone, for her group, proposed an amendment intended to weaken and modify the Union's declared opposition to protective legislation. Her amendment was finally carried, after hours of heated discussion, by a vote of 81 to 80.

The Feminist group, on their side, introduced a general resolution to the effect that equal franchise, equal moral standard, equal pay and opportunity in industry and the professions, be given precedence in the program; that family allowances and birth control involve the principle of equality *to a lesser degree* and should be dealt with secondarily. After a discussion even longer and more heated, this resolution was lost.

Thus, the equalitarians lost on both counts, and their answer, as we have seen, was to resign. Technically it is a victory for the humanitarians, but, as Lady Rhondda points out in her lively Feminist weekly, *Time and Tide,* it is "victory at a heavy cost. Miss Rathbone has lost from the executive all the old powerful personalities who were with the Union in the old days before the vote was won. She has lost too the most enterprising of the younger women. One is reminded of the saying of Pyrrhus: 'Another such victory and we are undone.'"

"If you set yourselves to work for pure equality between the sexes and nothing else," said Miss Rathbone, in the course of the final debate, "you are following an arid, barren and obsessing idea." And yet this "arid idea" seems to attract the freshest, youngest and warmest personalities in the movement. Lady Balfour of Burleigh, who acted as spokesman for the eleven who resigned, belongs to the new order of Feminist. She is, I should say, barely a voter, hardly over thirty, slim, tall and charming, and the mother of three or four small children. Like Lady Astor, she has a devoted Feminist husband in the House of Lords, who works in close co-operation with her. She is extremely modern. She believes in birth control and works for it. She believes in family endowment and is a member of the Family Endowment Council. But she wants to take her Feminism straight. "Equality first" is her motto.

Lady Balfour in her turn is some thirty years younger than Miss Rathbone. It is not inconceivable that she has been chosen by destiny as the third leader in a century of British Feminism.

Special Laws or No Special Laws for Women Workers

By Marcelle Renson
Avocat a la Cour d'Appel
Translated From L'International Feminin

THIS was one of the gravest problems discussed at the Congress of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance last June. So grave, indeed, that it roused actual polemics, the repercussions of which were felt in the press, and there were no papers, even to certain political sheets, which did not seize upon it as an opportunity to toot forth a little electoral publicity set to a Feminist tune in a humanitarian key.

The discussion was so heated and so general that even in the heart of delegations from the same country, divergent views were found. It must be recognized in all sincerity that both the arguments invoked in support of the proposition of legal regulation, and those in favor of absolute freedom were made with the utmost seriousness. Shall I say that they appeared to me to be of equal weight? Certainly not! That would be to admit a doubt about this matter which I am happy to say I do not entertain, since I spontaneously rallied to the banner of complete freedom.

The question, however, appears to me to be of such great vital interest from the Feminist point of view, that I should reproach myself if I were to set forth in these colums merely my own personal views, without giving my readers, by a glance at the situation, the means of judging of my opinion.

Here then, first of all, is how the question presented itself: Certain legislative acts have provided compulsory measures for the special regulation of women workers, measures which do not apply to men workers. To cite only a few of these rulings: there is the question, for example, of the prohibition of the employment of women in dangerous industries (lead, white lead, etc.); the prohibition of night work, the limitation of working-hours, compulsory leave for a certain time before and after childbirth.

Must we, as Feminists, praise this so-called protective legislation, or should we admit that the woman may, where her

labor is concerned, dispose of her person and her time with the same freedom as the male worker?

To justify their proposition the pro-regulationists make much of the fact that in every woman (who as a human being has a right to every kind of freedom) there is a future mother, who as such, fulfilling a social function, ought to be protected even against her will, with a view to the accomplishment of this function under the best possible conditions.

THIS being the finest certificate of incapacity ever awarded by women to other women, inasmuch as it assumes them to be incapable of perceiving their duty and their interests, they immediately soften the brutality of their formula by adding that in certain classes of work it is "impossible" for the women to be sufficiently enlightened upon their social obligations, nor even the physiological consequences of their acts, and they let themselves be guided either by the spirit of gain, or by pressing necessity, so that their choice is no longer free. So far as their ignorance goes, the argument seems to me very weak, because do not these other women feel that they themselves are better-informed women, capable of guiding and enlightening these others? And if this undertaking should seem too difficult, could they not obtain competent authorities, so that every woman engaging in an unhealthful occupation may be informed, before she signs a contract, of the impairment of health of which she may be the victim, by the same right as that under which she is informed of the workshop regulations?

Once instructed, why should a woman be adjudged, a *priori*, totally devoid of intelligence?

Driven by the spirit of gain? If you should tell a woman that in engaging in such an industry she will lose her beauty and bring on premature old age, that the joys of maternity will probably be denied to her; that in tiring herself by working too long hours day and night, she will make her children puny; I doubt if there would be one to agree to incur such physical deterioration or suffering for a little extra money.

And even if by chance there should be found some one who would choose sterility and high pay, one may very well say that this is not a case of a woman with a real mother-instinct, that society needs only good mothers and is not losing much. On the other hand, alas! those who fear the burdens of maternity often have recourse to other methods, which the law in spite of its vigilance is unable to suppress.

If on the contrary the woman worker accepts all this physical deterioration by reason of pressing necessity, because her expenses are considerable and she needs high wages, because she cannot find other employment, is not that in itself a condemnation of the policy of legal regulation? You would prohibit a remunerative occupation, and you would drive the woman and her children into the misery of poverty, which has drawbacks just as great.

Furthermore, are all women going to make homes for themselves? And if not, those who no longer have the hope of motherhood see themselves by this prohibition deprived of remunerative employment.

Finally, is not this one-sided regulation flagrantly unjust and should it not be sufficient to put Feminists on their guard? In every man is there not also a future father who will transmit to his offspring, pretty nearly as surely, the defects acquired in unhealthful occupations? Is any attention being paid to this?

Yes, indeed! When it is a question of protecting the race by regulating the freedom of the man, how often the law fails! (Difficulties in obtaining payment for the maintenance of the divorced woman and her children, for children born out of wedlock, etc.).

Legal regulation is unjust, especially so because it hits only certain women in certain industries, generally the poorest, those for whom society ought to have the most sympathy.

AGAIN, if we are trying to save a great number of these from being wornout, is any thought given to the housewife who wears herself out day and night in the home, to the home-worker and her anemia-producing vigils, to the sufferings caused by the lower wages drawn by women?

Do people believe that mothers on leave for their confinements can really be idle and do not have to go on with their household cares, with all the burdens which this obligation entails (particularly in the poor dwellings where there is not water on each floor, nor toilets either, where heavy pails of water and coal have to be carried up-stairs)?

Unjust is this legal regulation which under the pretext of protection for the race, hinders a woman's work, but does not interfere with the idle woman, who exhausts herself with amusements every night, the theatre, receptions, dancing.

And isn't it odd, to say the least, that no prohibition intervenes precisely where any pleasure may result for the man, in the exercise by the woman of the profession most dangerous of all for her health and that of the race? I am thinking here about prostitution; that its regulation, instead of prohibiting, on the contrary controls for the purpose of assuring to the man the maximum of security and to the woman the maximum of damage. And again, is there any concern that in spite of all the medical examinations to which they are subjected, they cannot be prevented from being propagators of a great many diseases while these are still undetectable during the period of incubation; that they may infect not only the man, but indirectly, innocent wives and little children?

Among the essentially dangerous professions for women and the race, my thought also turns naturally to the devotion of young nurses, the idea of prohibiting whose work does not occur to anyone, and whose duty it is to run the risk of every kind of contagion, at the same time and in addition to the risk of complete exhaustion. But the sick man knows that it is sweet for a suffering being to be surrounded by kindness and tenderness, and to be handled by deft and patient hands.

THERE will always be, unfortunately, trades dangerous and exhausting to the man as well as to the woman. Why forbid them to the one and permit them to the other? Let us leave to him, who feels the need of devoting himself to these to be the judge of his duty, whatever risk he may run.

In another way compulsory regulation constitutes a real danger, the scope of which the pro-regulationists do not sufficiently perceive.

Approving the exclusion of women from certain industries, they limit their field of activity and their opportunities to gain a living. Are there not already enough professions closed to them without any sound reason? How justly, for example, a woman lawyer's not being eligible to a magistracy?

They approve of the shutting off of certain professions, but is there any ruling to compensate for this loss of a career by the substitution of others especially reserved for women?

Approving legal regulations reducing the hours of work for women, and the like, they encourage the employer to give the preference to the male manual worker. Thus they diminish the chances of employment for the woman and take away her livelihood, if they do not cause her to be offered wages, for the smallness of which the excuse is made that her employer had to take into account the special legal favors accorded her.

And this is not a mere figment of the imagination. It actually happened that in France, a few years ago, when there was a discussion as to whether the young women professors in the Lycees, inadequately paid, ought to get the same appointments as the men professors (of university, grade, rank and equal standing) the objection which was immediately addressed to them was: "And you would get the same pay as your men colleagues? Do you forget that you may have children every year and the compulsory time off which that represents?"

Do the supporters of legal regulation believe that the pauperism existing among women out of work or who are earning

insufficiently does not engender quite as many, if not more, evils for the race than fatigue caused by work?

Women, let us distrust in general all legal regulations which are generously imposed on us under the pretext of protection. Protection always presupposes a protector and a *protégé*. If we wish to vindicate our right to full and entire civil and social capacity, let us force ourselves from this mentality of the *protégé*, a mentality hostile to all effort and all progress.

Let us keep in mind the example which the nations give us; as it is in the name of Divine protecting charity that the colonizing peoples are able to impose their laws on others. Let us remember always that it is in the name of protection that our good civil code delivers defenseless woman to the will, good or bad, of her husband, and which tolerates the legal theft of her property if her husband is unworthy and rapacious.

Let us remember, moreover, that it is through taking pity on our weakness that our infidelity is punished much more severely than that of our husband (the adultery of a husband always escapes all legal penalties if it is not committed within the conjugal domicile itself).

Finally, if you are good and loyal Feminists, who do not desire conflict between the sexes, but their collaboration in whatever collaboration can offer as highest and happiest for the home and society, do not support the proposition of compulsory legal regulation, which desires, side by side with absolute legal equality for woman, some special favors for her. That would be putting too fine a weapon into the hands of the opponents of woman's emancipation.

Note.—To really interpret my thought that I am not in rebellion except against all regulation prohibitive in form and especially for the woman as woman, leaving to her no freedom to show her own will. Thus, for example, an arrangement putting the fatigue or the inconveniences of maternity under the same head as an incapacity of a sick or injured male worker, and allowing her in consequence to take a paid vacation before and after childbirth, would not be considered a special law for women and as such hurtful to their interests.

Likewise, if a law under the head of a social measure taking into consideration the health of the child, should offer to the mother who accepts ten days leave before and after confinement, either her wages or compensation during this rest-period, this arrangement would not be a prohibitive measure, destructive of her own will in the matter, since it would permit her to decide for herself which was her most imperative interest or duty, work or rest.

Maryland Branch Holds Annual Meeting

MARYLAND has had a most successful year, terminating with a delightful annual meeting at Anderson Chapel, Hanover, Maryand, on Tuesday, May 24.

Every Tuesday throughout the fall and winter open house has been kept at headquarters, 19 West Chase street, Baltimore. Lawyers, doctors, teachers, artists, politicians, social workers, organizers and just plain people have come bringing their message to the organization and carrying away, the members hope, a new idea of the scope and work of the National Woman's Party.

Through the courtesy of Mrs. Almira Sweeten, preacher in charge of Anderson Chapel, and the members of the church, came an invitation to hold the annual meeting out in the green open country. A large delegation, therefore, motored out to Hanover in Howard county and a day of rest and enjoyment in an entirely new environment was spent with profit and pleasure on both sides. The county folks made ideal hostesses, serving at Mrs. Sweeten's residence a most enjoyable luncheon.

The morning session was given over to reports from the various departments. Mrs. Dora G. Ogle, in her report on legislative work, recommended that the Maryland Branch send EQUAL RIGHTS continuously to the members of the State Legislature for the next two years—the cost of this being about $200 per year. This recommendation was adopted—$22 was donated toward the fund at once and ways and means of raising the money discussed.

The following officers were elected for the ensuing year: President, Edith Houghton Hooker; First Vice-President, Dora G. Ogle; Second Vice-President, Helen E. Scott; Third Vice-President, Almira Sweeten; Recording Secretary, Florence Elizabeth Kennard; Corresponding Secretary, Mrs. Maxwell Zurndorf; Executive Board, Blanche Bubert, Louise Natali Graham, Elizabeth W. Dixon, Amelia Himes Walker, Elizabeth Forbes, Mary Bartlett Cullen, Emilie Doetsch, Florence Day, Aileen Erwin, Mrs. Louis Gutman, Mrs. Charles Carter, Sophia Rosett, Emma Maddox Funck, Annie Mullen, Mrs. George Smith, Jennie Feddeman, Minnie Rhine, Clara Frainee, Mrs. Howard North, Anne Huntington Scott, Emma Gombel, Mrs. Arthur Winton Perkins, Mrs. John Schley, Vera Fowler Lewis and Louisa S. Kennard.

Mrs. George Smith, full of grace and wit, made a charming presiding officer for the afternoon session, introducing as the first speaker, Amelia Himes Walker, who gave a sparkling ten-minute talk, using as a foundation, "Feminism and Jane Smith." Ida Mae Waters then brought her message of courage to the convention. Mrs. Marie Bauernshmidt of the Public School Association of Baltimore, in her characteristically witty address, captured the audience completely, giving sound advice on the school question. Mrs. Elizabeth W. Dixon, chairman of the National Farm Council, spoke most interestingly on "Man, Woman and Child—A Perfect Unit of Society."

Edith Houghton Hooker, National Chairman, fittingly closed the convention with words which stirred the hearts of those present and gave fresh inspiration to carry on the work for women until the goal is reached.

Mrs. Almira Sweeten, just before adjournment, organized a Howard County Branch of the National Woman's Party with headquarters at Hanover.

During the first week in June a supper and marionette show will be given on the lawn of the attractive home of Dora G. Ogle at Catonsville to help raise money for the special fund of $400 to be used to send EQUAL RIGHTS in season and out to the members of the State Legislature for two years.

Later in the month the annual garden and card party will be held at Uplands, Roland Park, the residence of Dr. and Mrs. Donald R. Hooker. This affair is always a huge success.

To Confer With State Leaders

RUTH HUDNUT, who will have completed her thesis for her master's degree at the University of Maryland on June 6, will leave that evening for Detroit, Michigan, where she will have a conference with Mrs. W. Nelson Whittemore, who is the chairman of the Pre-Convention Organization Committee, and Mrs. William H. McGraw, and after remaining in Detroit from June 7 to 9, she will go to Chicago, arriving the morning of June 10 and remaining there for a few days, where she will confer with the local committee and arrange for delegates to meet the train which will go through Chicago on July 3. She will then go to Milwaukee, arriving there June 13, and remaining for three days in Wisconsin. She will next go to Minneapolis and St. Paul, arriving there June 16; Sioux Falls, South Dakota, June 20; and then to Lincoln, Nebraska, June 23.

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